



Town of Griffith Indiana 5-year Park and Recreation Master Plan

2011-2015

**A Comprehensive Master Plan by the Griffith Park Board and the Griffith Parks
and recreation Department**

Griffith Parks and Recreation

111 N. Broad St

Griffith, IN 46319

219-922-3078

Website: <http://www.griffith.in.gov/portal/media-type/html/group/parks-and-recreation/page/default.psml>

Definition of the Planning Area

The planning area for the Town of Griffith Parks and Recreation Department is the same as the service area. The service area of the Griffith Park Department is the town limits. Our parks service mostly residents of Griffith.

Goals of the Plan

After many discussions, the Griffith Parks and Recreation Dept. and the Park Board have agreed on the following goals for the 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan:

- Gather feedback and input from the citizens of Griffith and report those findings in an accurate manner
- Use national recreational standards, combined with a careful needs analysis to create new priorities and revise current priorities for parks and creation in the town.
- Create a plan that is dynamic and provides pertinent, useful information and guidance for the next five years in Griffith.
- Present the plan and gain acceptance within the Griffith community.
- Submit the master plan to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Outdoor Recreation, adhering to the required timeframe for a draft by January 15, 2011 and a finalized plan by April 15, 2011.
- Receive approval from the IDNR for eligibility for application for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant programs.
- Use this plan as a springboard to apply for all applicable grants.

The Park Board/Department

The 2011 Griffith Park Board

The Park Board was created in accordance to the requirements of Indiana Code 36-10-3. Griffith has a four member board that serves staggered four year terms. The current Griffith Park Board is:

Scott Sutton, Board President

Term: 2007-12/31/2013

AJ Lewis, Board Vice-President

Term: 2010-12/31/2013

Robert Bubala, Board Secretary

Term: 2009-12/31/2012

Bob Boland, Board Treasurer

Term: 2008-retiring (on Board till Republican replacement is named by the Griffith Town Council)

The Park Department

Park Office

The main office for the parks department is located at 128 S.Colfax and the phone number is 219-922-3078. The website is: <http://www.griffith.in.gov/portal/media-type/html/group/parks-and-recreation/page/default.psm>

Mission

- The Mission of the Griffith Park and Recreation Department is: “To provide a superior recreation and park experience to all members of the Griffith community, creating a better quality of life, access to the outdoors, and equal opportunity for play of all kinds for all ages and **activities.**”

Park Board’s Departmental Vision and Goals for the Next Five Years

- The Griffith Parks and Recreation Department will offer a level of service appropriate to the size and growth of our community.
- The Department should act as a part of life in the Griffith community by providing facilities and activities for its residents.
- To maintain equipment and builders for the safety and pleasure of Griffith residents and to help beautify the community.

Staff

Park Superintendent: Leonard Bezat

Hired: 1997

Other Positions

The Griffith Parks and Recreation Department also employs 4 year round employees and approximately 8 seasonal employees each year. All current employees are part-time workers.

Volunteers

Depending on what programs are occurring, the number of volunteers can vary.

Facility Inventory

Griffith has an inventory of 6 parks and 1 bike trail, ranging in size from xxx to xxx acres (approximately xxxx acres total park land).

- Central Park
Central Park is centrally located in town on Broad and Pine Streets. The park is 15 acres in size and is very accessible. Central Park is the crown jewel of the Park System. The nature of the park is multi-use and is very family oriented. Parking is limited for the ball diamonds. A war memorial is located in the southeast corner of the park. A number of benches are located throughout the park. Some of the benches were purchased in memory of loved ones. Memorial bricks also line some of the park’s walkways. A major construction project took place in 2002 which including the building of a new pavilion and reshaping of land around the northeast corner for better drainage. A large playground area with modern equipment lies in the southern

section of the park and 2 sand volleyball courts lie in the northern section. Central bathroom facilities are located just west of the new park pavilion. The northwest and west central portions of the park are dedicated to ball fields, which number three. These fields include a little league field with basic dugouts and stands. The next field is also little league sized and is in the north central part of the park. It has lights, storage building and score keeper area. There is also a good deal of stands available for onlookers. These fields are maintained by Griffith Little League. A third ball field is located in the northwest corner of the park. It is an adult sized field with lights, combination concession stand, press box and storage building. There are dugouts and the field is entirely fenced in. In between the two little league fields is a tree memorial area. In the southwest corner of the site an attractive landscaped area with more benches.

- South Park

South Park is located west of Broad St, south of Avenue D, and is 8.4 acres in size. The north two thirds of the site is owned by the town and includes a paved parking lot, older picnic shelter, and restrooms. Sports fields are also located in this park and those include soccer, football, and basketball. A playground area is also located here.

- Tot Park

Tot Park is situated on 3.6 acres of land along the east side of Indiana Street from Miller to Lake Streets. This park has a playground area and an older pavilion.

- Cheever Park

Cheever Park covers 6.7 acres. This park is bordered by Pine St. on the north the backyards of homes on Elm St on the south, Elmer St on the east, and Wadsworth Elementary School on the west. This park has tennis and handball courts, 2 baseball fields, a small child play area, and an older pavilion. Park has a public restroom facility.

- 39th Street Park

This park covers .5 acres and is located at the intersection of Elmer and 39th Lane. Present on the site are a couple of pieces of playground equipment. The area is fenced in.

- Woodland Park

The total acreage of this park is 4.6 acres. This park is bordered by Pine St on the north, vacant property on the south, Heather Court on the west, and the backyards of homes on Rueth Drive on the east. A small parking lot is located on the north side of the park. A small playground area is present on the property.

- Bike/Walking Trail

Griffith has installed a bike path that runs from 45th St south to Colfax. This path provides a place for people to walk, bike, run, etc. This is scenic winding that path that is easily accessible for families to ride on and takes you through areas where bird watching can occur as well.

Current Programs

Griffith Parks and Recreation offers the youth of Griffith a program called Pals in The Park which takes place right after school ends. The program allows for kids to work on projects, have playtime, etc.

The parks are also utilized for such things as symphonies, movies, bands, sports, art events.

Budget

The Griffith Parks Department is issued an annual appropriation. Due to the budget amount the Griffith Parks Department does a very good job of spending their budget very judiciously. Property tax caps have and will continue to have an effect on the budget. Donations are also received from individuals and organizations which help to service our local parks.

The Griffith Parks and Recreation Department appropriated budget for the past 5 years is listed below:

Year	Appropriated Budget
2006	\$244,800.00
2007	\$244,800.00
2008	\$261,760.00
2009	\$258,475.00
2010	\$258,475.00

Natural Features and Landscape

Topography

The Town of Griffith is located in the Calumet Lacustrine Plain of former glacial Lake Chicago. This plain is characterized by three ancient beaches that extended southward from Lake Michigan for approximately 9 miles along the eastern boundary of Lake County and approximately 13 miles along the western boundary. The three beaches step upward in the southern direction from the Lake. The boundary between the second and third ancient beach is marked by Ridge Road at an elevation of 625' above mean sea level. To the north of Ridge Road, the town's topography slopes less steeply downward towards the Cady Marsh Ditch which serves as the principal drain for the town south of Ridge Road. South of the Cady marsh Ditch, the topography of the land gently slopes upward. With the exception of the southernmost section of town where the topography is characterized by small sporadic knolls and hills, the topography rises and falls gently parallel to the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Geology/Soils

According to the Soil Conservation Service's Soil Survey of Lake County Indiana, the two predominant soil Associations within the Town of Griffith are the Plainfield-Watseka Association and the Maumee-Bono-Warners Association. The Plainfield-Watseka Association contains moderately sloping to nearly level soils that are both excessively drained and somewhat poorly drained. The Maumee-Bono-Warners Association contains depressional and nearly level soils that are very poorly drained. The soil types in the Town of Griffith are the results of glacial deposits and glacial, glaciofluvial, shallow-water coastal and lake, wetland, and windblown sedimentation. The southernmost part of town is undeveloped wetlands.

Forest Resources

Griffith enjoys the presence of many different types of trees and with many of them being very mature trees, some parts of our parks benefit from the abundance of shade. Griffith parks could benefit from the addition of young trees and shrub plantings.

Water Resources

There are not many water resources in Griffith. The Cady Marsh ditch runs east to west in the northern part of town. The Calumet River borders the north side of town

- The Cady Marsh Ditch is a waterway that flows from east to west. The Cady Marsh ditch helps in mitigating water from the north side of town. The Army Corp of Engineers has built an underground water mitigation tunnel that has its entrance in the ditch. Currently a project is occurring that is placing flood walls on each side of the ditch and the widening of this waterway will help in the mitigation of water.

The Calumet River flows east to west along the northernmost edge of the Town of Griffith. This river marks our border and is untouched and natural. Future plans may call for a nature trail/wildlife observation area.

Man-made, Historical and Cultural

Transportation Links

Griffith sits in an area that consists of many major roadways. I80/94 borders the town on the north side. Cline Ave runs north and south along the western edge of town. Colfax borders the town on the east side. Main Street is one of the most used roads that runs through the south side going east and west. Another main road that is widely travelled in Griffith is Ridge Road (Route 6). This road runs east and west and is located on the northern side of town. The Griffith/Merrillville airport is a hub for private pilots and the Lake County Sheriff's Dept. The airport is in the southeast side of town.

Industry in Griffith

Griffith remains a blue collar community made up of light to moderate size industry that continues to become more technical in nature as we attempt to attract more business to the community. With a small airport and industrial park we continue to look for opportunities to attract a more highly technical and sophisticated business environment.

Cultural Griffith

Arts

Griffith has been and continues to be a supporter of the artistic community. Every July and September the Parks Dept plays host to the Park Full of Art Festival and the Boy Scouts Annual Festival.

Music

The town of Griffith hosts many different types of musical concerts throughout the year. The types include ethnic, rock, swing, and classical. These types of events are sponsored by the Griffith Park Dept and Griffith Special Events Committee. Griffith is on the tour schedule for the Northwest Indiana Symphony.

Festivals

During the year the town of Griffith hosts an event named Rock'N'Rails. This event features bands of many types of music as well as food and merchandise vendors.

Historical Society

The town of Griffith does have a historical society. The society has many pieces of memorabilia pertaining to our town's history. A lot of the focus of the materials revolves around the railroad system in town. This entity operates separate from the Town of Griffith.

Social and Economic Factors (From the 2000 US Census)

Data gathered from:

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=46319&_cityTown=46319&_state=&_zip=46319&_lang=en&_sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&show_2003_tab=&redirect=Y

Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights:

General Characteristics -	Number	Percent	U.S.
Total population	19,174		
Male	9,329	48.7	49.1%
Female	9,845	51.3	50.9%
Median age (years)	36.0	(X)	35.3
Under 5 years	1,228	6.4	6.8%
18 years and over	14,335	74.8	74.3%
65 years and over	2,089	10.9	12.4%
One race	18,837	98.2	97.6%
White	16,320	85.1	75.1%
Black or African American	1,760	9.2	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	69	0.4	0.9%
Asian	148	0.8	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	7	0.0	0.1%
Some other race	533	2.8	5.5%
Two or more races	337	1.8	2.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,574	8.2	12.5%
Household population	19,158	99.9	97.2%
Group quarters population	16	0.1	2.8%
Average household size	2.57	(X)	2.59
Average family size	3.09	(X)	3.14
Total housing units	7,752		
Occupied housing units	7,458	96.2	91.0%
Owner-occupied housing units	5,048	67.7	66.2%
Renter-occupied housing units	2,410	32.3	33.8%
Vacant housing units	294	3.8	9.0%

Social Characteristics - show more >>	Number	Percent	U.S.
Population 25 years and over	12,496		
High school graduate or higher	11,000	88.0	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,797	14.4	24.4%
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	1,908	13.3	12.7%
Disability status (population 5 years and over)	2,875	16.0	19.3%
Foreign born	604	3.1	11.1%
Male, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	4,206	57.9	56.7%
Female, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	4,239	53.3	52.1%

Speak a language other than English at home (population 5 years and over)	1,474	8.2	17.9%
Economic Characteristics - show more >>	Number	Percent	U.S.
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	10,592	70.8	63.9%
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 years and older)	27.2	(X)	25.5
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	49,181	(X)	41,994
Median family income in 1999 (dollars)	56,679	(X)	50,046
Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	21,590	(X)	21,587
Families below poverty level	154	2.9	9.2%
Individuals below poverty level	828	4.3	12.4%

Housing Characteristics - show more >>	Number	Percent	U.S.
Single-family owner-occupied homes	4,834		
Median value (dollars)	106,500	(X)	119,600
Median of selected monthly owner costs	(X)	(X)	
With a mortgage (dollars)	959	(X)	1,088
Not mortgaged (dollars)	318	(X)	295

(X) Not applicable.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3)

By observing the information above, we can see that the average age of a Griffith resident is a person in their mid 30s. As a park department, we need to try to not only make our parks suitable to that age bracket, but also to other age brackets as well. Recently the YMCA has expressed an interest in providing some programs for residents at the Franklin building. With having many great independent sports leagues in town (softball, baseball, soccer, football, etc) these programs allow the kids to learn how to be competitive and also to get exercise and learn how to function as a team. With the current budget of the park department, we do not see a reduction in fees, but will continue to do our best to keep fees as reasonable as possible. Also as the needs of the town change, whether it is related to age or needs, the Parks Dept will make an effort to meet those needs, budget permitting.

Accessibility and Universal Design

Statement of Accessibility for Griffith Parks and Recreation

“The Griffith Parks Department makes it a part of our mandate to provide reasonable modification under the law for people with disabilities to all of our programs, activities, and services. We strive to provide access for people with physical and mental disabilities. “

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act requires that local governments with over 50 employees designate at least one individual to act as an ADA compliance coordinator for the entire government unit. The Town of Griffith ADA compliance coordinator is Ronald Szafarczyk. Any person or persons who have complaints, grievances, or comments related to accessibility may contact Mr. Szafarczyk at Town Hall – 219-924-7500.

Current Accessibility

Griffith has accessible walkways, and picnic shelters. Progress on accessibility issues in Griffith have been hampered over the years by a lack of funding. Walkways have or are being improved to allow for easier access into and around our parks. Residents wanting to inquire about facilities should contact the Park Department or the Town Clerk for more information.

Proposed Accessibility

Griffith has a strong need to replace old bathrooms. Many of them do not meet the ADA. A cost to replace these bathrooms needs to be determined. Also ADA accessible playground equipment needs to be placed in the Griffith park system.

Public Participation

The Griffith Park Board recognizes our mission of service provision to this community. The best way for us to provide service to the community is to ask what their needs, opinions, and preferences are, and to apply that information to all of our future planning. The Griffith Park Board hosts monthly meetings for the residents to attend. For this master plan, we used two methods of public input. All monthly meetings of the Griffith Park Board are announced on the Town of Griffith website so that the public can attend.

Public Meeting

The Griffith Park Board held a public meeting that had little attendance. The meeting was advertised in the newspaper and on the town's website.

- Thursday July 29th, 2010, 6:00pm, Griffith Town Hall – Council Chambers
 - o 2 citizens in attendance, plus 4 park board members.
 - o Citizens expressed concerns with the condition of the Babe Ruth baseball field. Felt that improvements were needed.

Mail Survey

The IDNR requires a random method of gathering public input, therefore, the Griffith Park Board created a mail survey for distribution throughout the community. This method was accomplished by including the survey in with the monthly water bills. The survey contained 13 questions which covered current park(s) being utilized, how often parks are being utilized, types of activities, pavilion rentals, future spending, recommended types of improvements, ages of people using the parks, and how long those citizens have lived in Griffith. (Survey is attached in the rear of this document). The surveys were mailed out on August 5th, 2010.

- 706 residents responded to the survey and 5800 copies were mailed. The percentage of responders was 12%.
- Listed below are a sample set of results from the survey.

2010 Griffith Parks Town Survey - 145 randomly picked surveys out of 706 returned (5800 sent)

Question		Totals	%		
Do you or anyone in your household use any of the following parks in Griffith?					
	Ready School Playground	11	2.2%		
	Franklin School Playground	14	2.8%		
	Franklin School Ball Fields	9	1.8%		
	Franklin School Basketball Courts	12	2.4%		
	Central Park	111	22.4%		
	Central Park Ball Fields	25	5.0%		
	Beiriger School Playground	25	5.0%		
	High School Tennis Courts	22	4.4%		
	Cheever Park	23	4.6%		
	Cheever Park Ball Fields	6	1.2%		
	Cheever Park Tennis/Handball Courts	6	1.2%		
	Tot Park	21	4.2%		
	Woodland Park	15	3.0%		
	South Park	31	6.3%		
	South Park Soccer Fields	21	4.2%		
	39th St. Park	3	0.6%		
	Bike Trail	89	17.9%		
	Oak Ridge Prairie	52	10.5%		
				Total Entries	496
How often do you use the parks you indicated in the question above?					
	Every Day	5	3.6%		
	4-5 times a week	23	16.7%		
	3 or fewer times a week	48	34.8%		
	once or twice a month	39	28.3%		
	once or tice a year	16	11.6%		
	never	7	5.1%		
				Total Entries	138
How do you use the parks? What activities?					
	musical events	46	19.6%		
	sports activities	43	18.3%		
	picnics	27	11.5%		
	playground	53	22.6%		
	reading	6	2.6%		
	walking	36	15.3%		
	biking	13	5.5%		
	arts	10	4.3%		
	movies	1	0.4%		
				Total Entries	235
How far do you live from the nearest park or recreational area?					
	less than 3 blocks	62	46.6%		
	3-6 blocks	43	32.3%		
	6-10 blocks	23	17.3%		
	more than 10 blocks	5	3.8%		
				Total Entries	133
Is there anything prevents or restricts you from use of the parks?					
	No	98	91.6%		
	I don't use the parks	3	2.8%		
	Yes	6	5.6%		
				Total Entries	107
Do any of these physical barriers restrict or prevent you from using the parks?					
	Physical access to the park or equipment	4	30.8%		
	Park is too far away	2	15.4%		
	Lack of accessible parking	7	53.8%		
	other	0	0.0%		
				Total Entries	13
Have you ever rented a park pavillion for a special occasion? If not what factor has stopped you from doing so?					
	Cost	13	11.2%		
	Location	5	4.3%		
	Size of Pavillion	0	0.0%		
	No occasion to rent facility	98	84.5%		
				Total Entries	116
Would you like Griffith to invest/spend more money in park facilities?					
	Yes	63	48.5%		
	No	20	15.4%		
	Depends on investment	43	33.1%		
	I don't use the parks	4	3.1%		
				Total Entries	130
How would you rate the overall quality of Griffith parks?					
	Very good	48	36.1%		
	Good	53	39.8%		
	Average	30	22.6%		
	Poor	2	1.5%		
	Very poor	0	0.0%		
				Total Entries	133
How would you like Griffith to pay for new park ammenities?					
	Use existing budget	77	25.9%		
	New fees	13	4.4%		
	Close other parks	7	2.4%		
	Grants	81	27.3%		
	Donations	85	28.6%		
	Reduce activities	0	0.0%		
	Municipal bonds	27	9.1%		
	Increase property taxes	2	0.7%		
	All of the above	5	1.7%		
				Total Entries	297

What would you like to see Griffith Parks add or improve?		Totals	%
	Playground equipment	19	8.5%
	Better ball fields	14	6.3%
	Skating area	37	16.6%
	Gathering areas/benches	45	20.2%
	Better tennis courts	4	1.8%

Public Presentation of Plan

Public presentation of the plan took place on Wednesday March 30th at Town Hall.

Needs Analysis

What is Issue Analysis?

Since the Griffith Park Board is developing this master plan in house, we are using a simplified issue analysis method of performing the required needs analysis. This analysis tallied results from both methods of public input and the park board and identified common themes from those methods and condensed those themes into underlying issues. The issues were placed in a priority order based on financial and other constraints, then turned into a coherent priority and action plan.

Issues/Information from the public input

- The top 3 Griffith Park facilities indicted for use are
 - o Central
 - o Bike Trail
 - o South Park
- Use the parks 3 times or less per week
- Primarily use the parks for the playgrounds
- Majority of people do not have a reason to rent a park pavilion
- Close to half of residents want more spending on the parks.
 - o Want the Department to accomplish this by use of current funds, grants and donations.
- Improvements desired revolve around the addition of an ice skating area, more walking trails and benches.
- Add activities for youth, adults and seniors.

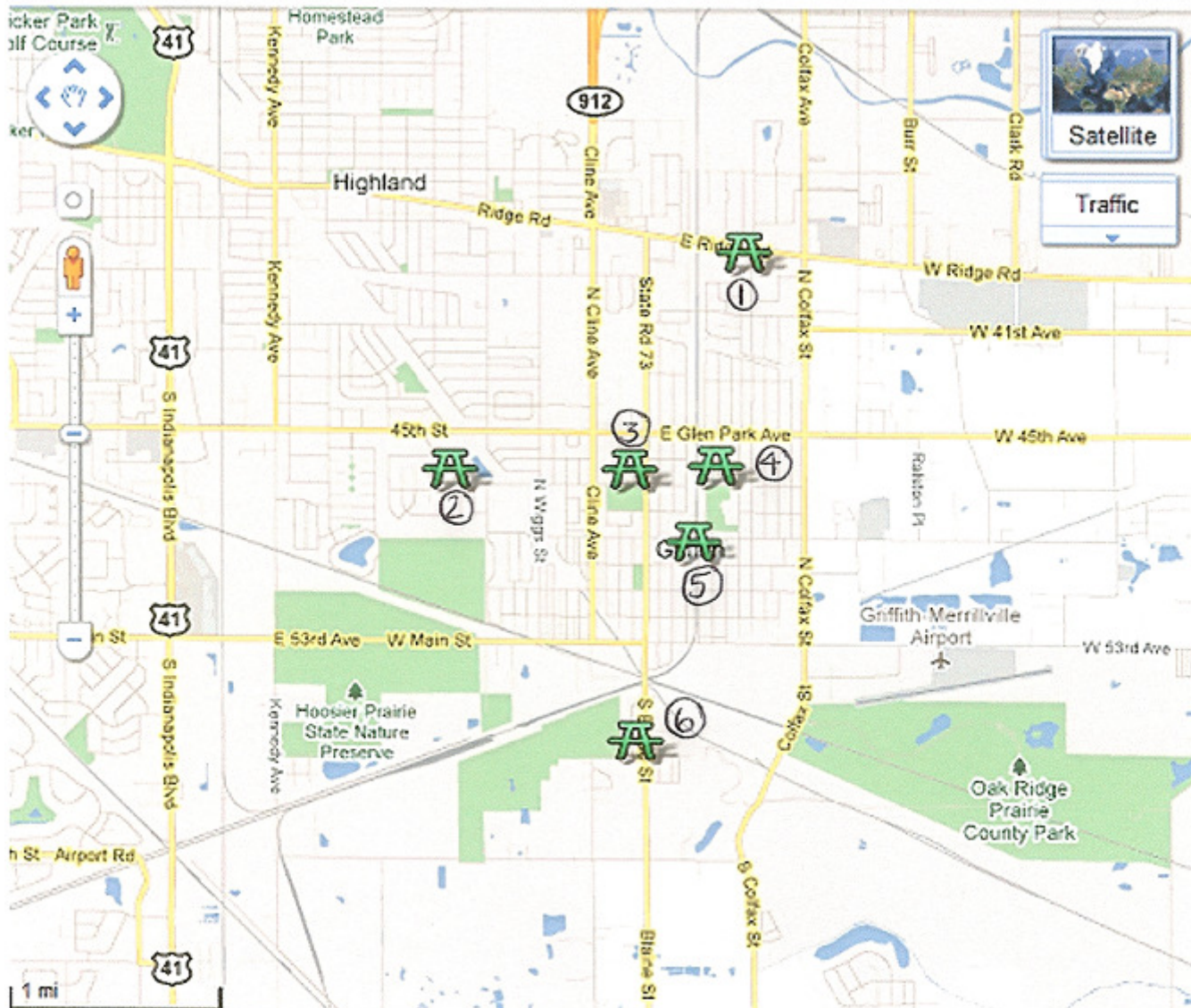
National Standards

According to the 1983 National Recreation and Park Association's "Recreation, park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines" by Dr. James Hall and Dr. James Mertes, a town the size of Griffith should have around 8.25 to 10 acres of developed open space per 1000 residents. Since Griffith has approximately 17,000 residents that suggests a "recommended" minimum of 140.25 acres of land for outdoor recreational use. Griffith currently has approximately xxxx acres of land in its service area. This leaves the Griffith Parks Department with xxxxx acres of in developed open space.

What We Need

- New and accessible play equipment
- More programs of many kinds
- Rehabilitate park pavilions

Current Park Locations



Map provided by Google

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=112585206493041924142.00046cc8fcf0922951f4e&z=13>

- #1 – 39th St Park – Located on 39th St – 1 block west of Arbogast**
- #2 – Woodland Park – Located on Pine St – 1 block west of Rueth Drive**
- #3 – Central Park – Located at the intersection of Broad and Pine Streets**
- #4 – Cheever Park – Located at the intersection of Elmer and Pine Streets**
- #5 – Tot Park – Located at the intersection of Lake and Indiana Streets**
- #6 – South Park – Located at the intersection of Avenue D and South Griffith Blvd**

Priorities and Action Schedule

Setting the priorities for this plan was difficult as we continue to experience financial constraints. Capital projects need to be initiated on the items we have listed previous in this plan.

Transition into the New Plan

During the transition into this plan, the Griffith Park Department will concentrate on fundraising and using alternative methods of funding.

Potential fundraising options for future funding

- Municipal bonds
 - o Current bond will be paid in-full August 2012 (Central Park work)
- User fees
- Creative partnerships (with private and public entities)
- Grants (Federal, State, Foundation, Non-profit, etc)
- Donations
 - o In-kind, service, and products
 - o Bequests
 - o Tax write offs
 - o Corporate donations
- Naming rights

Fundraising will be critical; each of the action plan elements depends on having adequate available funds to create it. The residents of Griffith have provided input into what they want from the parks and recreation department for the next 5 years; now it is time to figure out a way to pay for it. One important consideration of the fundraising process is the old truism: “It takes money to make money.” This is particularly true of the grant application process. Most grants have some variety of ‘match’, which requires that the grant recipient provide a required percentage of the total cost of the grant funded project. As an example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund provides a 50% reimbursement of the costs of approved projects, which means that Griffith must raise or allocate in advance the needed funds for the projects we wish to build under this or any grant.

Priorities for 2011-2015

- Investigate fundraising opportunities
- Create additional programs for residents of all ages
- Removal of any unsafe play equipment, preparation of play areas for new equipment
- Installation of new, safe, and accessible equipment (using volunteers or donated materials when possible)

Appendix

- The “Anytown Indiana 5-year Park and Recreation Master Plan” was used as the resource for this plan.

Attachments

- (A) Public comment survey